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151209Z Feb 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00
	DODE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00
	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00
	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	R-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/010W	
				-----C60C21	151209Z	/38	

FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8228  
INFO NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000754

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER  
LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR WILLIAMS  
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL. 02/14/11  
TAGS: [PGOV PHUM PINS PINR ZI ZANU PF MDC](#)  
SUBJECT: MUGABE SAID TO BE BEHIND OVERTURE TO OPPOSITION

REF: HARARE 628

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL IRVING. REASONS: 1.5  
(B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) PRESIDENT MUGABE IS BEHIND OVERTURES MADE TO THE  
OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) IN LATE  
JANUARY BY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA,  
ACCORDING TO A SENIOR MDC ADVISOR. THE SECRET CONTACTS ARE  
CONTINUING BETWEEN ENVOYS FROM BOTH SIDES AND MIGHT LEAD TO  
A MEETING BETWEEN MUGABE AND A SENIOR MDC REPRESENTATIVE  
LATER THIS MONTH. WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT THE PRESIDENT  
INTENDS TO GIVE ANY REAL POWER TO THE MDC BUT, RATHER, HIS  
OFFER OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IS CERTAINLY  
DESIGNED TO COOPT HIS OPPOSITION. MDC LEADER MORGAN  
TSVANGIRAI IS LIKELY ENGAGING IN THIS DIALOGUE IN AN EFFORT

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TO AVOID FURTHER GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED BLOODSHED AND, WE  
SUSPECT, IS ATTRACTED BY THE OPPORTUNITY FOR HIS PARTY TO  
HAVE A VOICE IN DECIDING THE WAY FORWARD FOR ZIMBABWE.  
TSVANGIRAI WILL HAVE A VERY TOUGH -- IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE --

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TASK CONVINCING MANY IN HIS PARTY'S OWN LEADERSHIP OF THE  
VALUE OF JOINING HANDS WITH ZANU-PF, MANY OF WHOM BLAME  
MUGABE PERSONALLY FOR ZIMBABWE'S SLIDE INTO POLITICAL AND  
ECONOMIC TURMOIL. END SUMMARY.

ZANU-MDC SECRET TALKS CONTINUE

2. (C) WE REPORTED REFTEL THAT SPEAKER OF ZIMBABWE'S  
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PARLIAMENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA IN LATE JANUARY SENT FEELERS  
TO THE MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC), PROPOSING THAT  
THE OPPOSITION PARTY JOIN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY.  
ALTHOUGH MDC LEADER MORGAN TSVANGIRAI CONSIDERED THE  
DETAILS OF MNANGAGWA'S INITIAL OFFER UNACCEPTABLE, HE  
AGREED TO CONTINUE THE SECRET DIALOGUE.

3. (C) ON FEBRUARY 14, MDC SENIOR ADVISOR CLIVE PUZEY  
(PROTECT) TOLD CHARGE AND POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF THAT  
CONTACTS HAVE CONTINUED SINCE HIS FEBRUARY 2 CONVERSATION  
WITH US (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO PUZEY, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT  
PRESIDENT MUGABE HIMSELF IS BEHIND MNANGAGWA'S OFFER.  
PUZEY REPORTED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S LONG-TIME CONFIDANT,  
CATHOLIC PRIEST FATHER FIDELIS MUKONORI, S.J., HAD RECENTLY  
MET WITH PUZEY ONE-ON-ONE. IN THAT MEETING, FIDELIS HAD  
CLAIMED THAT MUGABE IS UNCERTAIN OF HIS CONTINUED HOLD ON

POWER, DISTRUSTS THOSE AROUND HIM, AND IS AWARE THAT, IF DEVELOPMENTS HERE CONTINUE ON THEIR PRESENT COURSE, ZIMBABWE IS FACING CERTAIN ECONOMIC DISASTER. ALL OF THESE FACTORS, FIDELIS OSTENSIBLY SAID, HAD LED MUGABE TO MAKE THE OVERTURE.

14. (C) PUZEY REPORTED THAT TSVANGIRAI, WITH WHOM HE HAD SPOKEN THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, IS WILLING TO AGREE TO AN AMNESTY FOR MUGABE AND THE PAYMENT OF A PENSION UPON THE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE FROM OFFICE. TSVANGIRAI REPORTEDLY TOLD PUZEY THAT HE IS INCLINED TO JOIN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IF IT RESULTS IN RESTORATION OF THE RULE OF LAW AND BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT ON THE WAY FORWARD FOR ZIMBABWE. IF THOSE IMPORTANT GOALS ARE ACHIEVED, TSVANGIRAI IS YOUNG AND WILLING TO WAIT ANOTHER FEW YEARS

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FOR HIS SHOT AT THE PRESIDENCY. THE ALTERNATIVE TO REACHING SOME SORT OF AGREEMENT, PUZEY INSISTED, IS BLOODSHED ON A SCALE NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN ZIMBABWE, AS MUGABE WILL UNLEASH INDISCRIMINATE KILLING IN A BRUTAL EFFORT TO MAINTAIN HIS GRIP ON POWER.

CONTACTS VERY CLOSE-HOLD

15. (C) PUZEY SAID THAT ZANU-PF GO-BETWEEN GOODSON NGUNI HAS ASKED HIM TO BRIEF THE BRITISH AND US ON THE STATUS OF THESE TALKS, WHICH REMAINED VERY CLOSE-HOLD. HE NOTED THAT, IN ADDITION TO HIMSELF, MUGABE, TSVANGIRAI, NGUNI, AND FATHER FIDELIS, ONLY A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE ONGOING CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES: TSVANGIRAI'S ADVISOR GANDI MUDZINGWA, COMMERCIAL FARMERS

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UNION PRESIDENT TIM HENWOOD, AND STANBIC BANK MANAGING DIRECTOR GREG BRACKENRIDGE.

NEXT STEPS

16. (C) PUZEY SAID HE AND NGUNI HAD AGREED THAT MORNING THAT A SENIOR MDC REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD MEET WITH PRESIDENT MUGABE TO AGREE ON NEXT STEPS. PUZEY AND NGUNI DECIDED TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HARARE 000754

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SUBJECT: MUGABE SAID TO BE BEHIND OVERTURE TO OPPOSITION

PROCEED ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING ELABORATE SCENARIO,  
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WHICH PRESUMABLY PROVIDES COVER FOR A MUGABE MEETING WITH THE MDC. PAUL NYATHI, AN MDC MP WHO IS WELL-RESPECTED ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, WOULD BE ASKED TO PROPOSE ON THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT THAT LEGISLATORS SING "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" TO PRESIDENT MUGABE ON HIS BIRTHDAY FEBRUARY 21. NYATHI WOULD FURTHER SUGGEST THAT A BIPARTISAN DELEGATION OF MPS BE SENT TO DELIVER A BIRTHDAY CARD TO THE PRESIDENT. ONCE AT STATE HOUSE, NYATHI WILL BE PULLED ASIDE BY FATHER FIDELIS TO MEET ONE-ON-ONE WITH MUGABE, WHO REPORTEDLY IS

PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A MEETING. THE PRESIDENT AND NYATHI WOULD THEN DISCUSS THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROCEEDING WITH FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, INCLUDING AGREEING ON A VENUE OUTSIDE OF ZIMBABWE.

TOUGH SELL  
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17. (C) THE CHARGE COMMENTED THAT, IF NOT HANDLED CAREFULLY, TSVANGIRAI'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH ZANU-PF COULD TEAR APART THE MDC. COULD TSVANGIRAI CONVINCE THE MDC LEADERSHIP AND GENERAL MEMBERSHIP TO JOIN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY? IT WOULD BE A TOUGH SELL, PUZEY ACKNOWLEDGED. HE THOUGHT THAT MDC MPS DAVID COLTART, MIKE AURET, SR., AND TRUDY STEVENSON WOULD BE THE MOST DIFFICULT TO CONVINCE. IF THE TALKS ARE CONSTRUCTIVE AND RESULT IN A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT, THOUGH, PUZEY MUSED THAT PAUL NYATHI COULD BE A KEY FIGURE IN BRINGING HIS FELLOW MDC LEGISLATORS ALONG.

COMMENT  
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18. (C) THE ELABORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A MUGABE-NYATHI MEETING AT STATE HOUSE ARE UNDERSTANDABLE, AS WE SUSPECT BOTH SIDES ARE NERVOUS ABOUT KEEPING THEIR DISCUSSIONS SECRET. A MORE DIFFICULT EXERCISE IS ANALYZING THE LIKELY

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MOTIVATIONS OF MUGABE AND TSVANGIRAI FOR ENGAGING IN THIS DIALOGUE. MUGABE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS UNLIKELY TO WIN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THAT IS FREE AND FAIR, BUT HE HAS MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT HE IS WILLING TO USE ANY AND ALL METHODS TO WIN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PRESIDENT REALIZES THAT SUCH A VICTORY WOULD COME AT A VERY HIGH PRICE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND HE MUST FIGURE IT IS WORTH EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF HOLDING ON TO POWER. AS A BRITISH DIPLOMAT REMARKED TO US, HOWEVER, MORGAN TSVANGIRAI IS LIVING IN A FANTASYLAND IF HE THINKS THAT MUGABE, IN EXTENDING THIS APPARENT OLIVE BRANCH, INTENDS TO REACH A GENUINE POWER-SHARING AGREEMENT WITH THE MDC. WE WOULD WAGER THAT MUGABE'S OBJECTIVE IS TO COOPT HIS OPPOSITION AND THAT, IF THE ATTEMPT IS UNSUCCESSFUL, HE WILL RESORT TO HIS TIME-TESTED SUCCESSFUL TACTICS OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION. NGUNI'S PUTATIVE REQUEST THAT PUZEY BRIEF US AND THE BRITISH IS INTERESTING, AND SUGGESTS THAT MUGABE WANTS TO SEND US A SIGNAL THAT HE IS TRYING TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

19. (C) IN AGREEING TO ENGAGE IN THIS DIALOGUE, TSVANGIRAI APPEARS TO BE MOTIVATED PRIMARILY BY A DESIRE TO AVOID BLOODSHED HE BELIEVES WOULD OTHERWISE BE INEVITABLE AND TO ELICIT RESTORATION OF THE RULE OF LAW. IN ADDITION, THE OFFER OF 40 PERCENT OF CABINET SEATS MUST BE, ON THE SURFACE, AN ATTRACTIVE OFFER FOR A PARTY THAT HAS BEEN  
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UNABLE TO RESPOND TO ITS CONSTITUENTS' DEMANDS FOR CHANGE, GIVEN ITS ABSENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. SINCE MUGABE HAS MADE CLEAR THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW THE MDC TO ASSUME POWER EVEN IF IT WINS IN 2002, TSVANGIRAI MUST HAVE DECIDED THAT IT IS AT LEAST WORTH SEEING WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAS TO OFFER. THE MDC LEADER'S INCLINATION TO PROCEED WITH SECRET TALKS, HOWEVER, POSES A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO THE COHESION OF THE PARTY. AS PUZEY INTIMATED, MANY IN THE MDC LEADERSHIP AND AMONG THE PARTY'S SUPPORTERS BLAME MUGABE PERSONALLY FOR ZIMBABWE'S DESCENT INTO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL AND WOULD STRONGLY REJECT PARTICIPATION IN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY WITH A PRESIDENT THEY CONSIDER A WAR CRIMINAL. BESIDES, MANY ZIMBABWEANS BELIEVE IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THE MDC ASSUMES POWER AND THAT ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS WAIT FOR THE MUGABE-LED ZANU TO IMplode. TSVANGIRAI, THEREFORE, MUST TREAD VERY CAREFULLY. END

SIPDIS  
COMMENT.

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